

Message Text

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ACTION H-03

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FM AMEMBASSY MANILA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1988

INFO AMEMBASSY SEOUL

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 MANILA 4317

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: OREP (FRASER, DONALD M)

SUBJECT: CODEL FRASER VISIT TO MANILA

SUMMARY-CONCLUSION: CODEL FRASER VISITED MANILA APRIL 3-6. HE WAS RECEIVED BY PRESIDENT MARCOS WHO ACCOMPANIED HIM ON TRIP TO ELECTRIFICATION AND IRRIGATION PROJECTS IN CENTRAL LUZON. CODEL MET WITH LOPEZ/OSMENA AND SENATOR AQUINO (SEPTELS) AS WELL AS MAJOR OPPOSITION FIGURES SUCH AS SALONGA, TANADA AND DIOKNO. FONSEC ROMULO HOSTED LUNCHEON FOR CODEL. AMBASSADOR'S DINNER IN CODEL'S HONOR INCLUDED EXECUTIVE SECRETARY, DEFENSE AND INFORMATION SECRETARIES AS WELL AS LEADING OPPOSITION FIGURES. DURING HIS DISCUSSIONS CODEL SEEMED MOST INTERESTED IN LEARNING A) WHETHER IMPOSITION OF MARTIAL LAW JUSTIFIED, B) WHERE MARCOS IS HEADING, C) HOW MOST FILIPINOS PERCEIVE U.S. ROLE VIS-A-VIS MARTIAL LAW, D) IMPACT OF U.S. MILITARY ASSISTANCE ON GOVERNMENT ACTIVITIES, AND E) WHETHER THERE HAVE BEEN HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS BY GOP. CODEL EMPHASIZED HE HAD NO PRECONCEIVED NOTIONS ABOUT PHILIPPINES AND WAS HERE TO LEARN. GOP PUT ITS BEST FOOT FORWARD AND CODEL SEEMED APPRECIATIVE OPPORTUNITY MEET WITH AQUINO, ET AL. WE SUSPECT, HOWEVER, CODEL DISTURBED BY LENGTHY PROCEDURAL DELAYS IN DISPENSING JUSTICE TO DETAINEES, CHARGES OF DETAINEE TORTURE BY LEADING OPPOSITION FIGURES AND BY CASUISTIC DEFENSE OF REGIME'S

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LIMITATION ON FREEDOMS BY GOVERNMENT SPOKESMEN. WE DID NOT

HAVE ADEQUATE OPPORTUNITY STRESS RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MILITARY ASSISTANCE AND BASES AND SUGGEST THIS BE DONE IN WASHINGTON PRIOR TO CODEL'S HEARINGS ON PHILIPPINES WHICH WE UNDERSTAND MAY TAKE PLACE IN MAY. END SUMMARY.

1. CONGRESSMAN DONALD FRASER ACCOMPANIED BY STAFFER SALZBERG AND DEPARTMENT ESCORT OFFICER RICHARDSON VISITED MANILA APRIL 3 TO APRIL 6. AFTER INITIAL DISCUSSIONS WITH AMBASSADOR, CODEL BEGAN STRENUOUS ROUND OF CALLS AS REQUESTED. ON APRIL 3, CODEL MET WITH FATHER HECHANOVA, (NASSA); INTEGRATED BAR PRESIDENT JUSTICE REYES; NATIONAL COUNCIL OF CHURCHES SECRETARY MERCADO; FORMER MANILA TIMES PUBLISHER JOAQUIN ROCES AND SENATORS SALONGA, TANADA, RODRIGO AND MRS. AQUINO. ALL EXCEPT MERCADO STRONGLY CRITICAL OF GOVERNMENT. IN RESPONSE TO CODEL QUERY THEY OPINED THAT U.S. PERCEIVED AS AT LEAST TACITLY SUPPORTING MARCOS REGIME IN ORDER PROTECT U.S. INTERESTS, I.E., INVESTMENT AND BASES. SOME MAINTAINED U.S. MILITARY ASSISTANCE, THOUGH MODEST, WAS SYMBOL OF U.S. SUPPORT AND SHOULD BE STOPPED. THEY CLAIMED MARCOS HAD NO INTENTION OF IMPLEMENTING CONSTITUTION AND SAID HE, HIS WIFE AND FAMILY CORRUPT. ALL CRITICIZED LACK OF FREEDOM OF PRESS AND GENERAL "ARBITRARINESS OF REGIME."

2. ON APRIL 4, CODEL BREAKFASTED WITH ARCHBISHOP SIN WHO TOLD HIM MOST OF PEOPLE SUPPORT MARTIAL LAW GOVERNMENT AND THAT MARCOS' GREATEST WEAKNESS WAS IN NOT DEVELOPING SUCCESSION ARRANGEMENT (MEMCOM POUCHED EA/PHL). DURING 45-MINUTE DISCUSSION WITH PRESIDENT, MARCOS PROVIDED CODEL WITH CONFIDENTIAL GOP REPORT ON HUMAN RIGHTS BUT HE FAILED RESPOND TO CODEL'S QUERY ON WHEN MARTIAL LAW WOULD END. CODEL HELPED MARCOS OPEN ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE IN BATAAN AND IRRIGATION PROJECT IN PAMPANGA AND SPOKE FAVORABLY OF AID IDENTIFICATION WITH THESE PROGRAMS. TRIP RECEIVED CONSIDERABLE PRESS PLAY WITH FRONT PAGE PICTURE OF CODEL AND MARCOS IN BULLETIN. FONSEC ROMULO HOSTED LUNCHEON IN CODEL'S HONOR. GUESTS INCLUDED CHIEF JUSTICE, DEFENSE, INVESTMENTS, INFORMATION AND EXECUTIVE SECRETARIES. DURING THIS LUNCH, ROMULO GAVE RINGING DEFENSE OF MARTIAL LAW, AND DEFENSE SECRETARY ENRILE EFFECTIVELY ANSWERED SEVERAL POLITE QUESTIONS. AFTER LUNCHEON, CODEL MET WITH FORMER ATENEO PRESIDENT AND CONFIDENTIAL

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CONCON DELEGATE FATHER ORTIZ, WHO WAS MODERATELY CRITICAL OF MARTIAL LAW GOVERNMENT. CODEL THEN MET WITH FORMER COLUMNIST MAX SOLIVEN WHO MAINTAINED "MARCOS SITTING ON VOLCANO" AND THAT NEXT TWO YEARS HERE VERY CRITICAL. CODEL NOTED HE HAD NOT HEARD THIS VIEW DURING PREVIOUS DISCUSSIONS WHERE GENERAL LINE HAD BEEN MARCOS COULD CONTINUE IN POWER AS LONG AS THERE NO DETERIORATION IN ECONOMIC CONDITIONS AND THAT IF THERE TROUBLE MARCOS MOST LIKELY

WILL BE REPLACED BY MILITARY JUNTA.

3. AFTER ATTENDING AMBASSADOR'S RECEPTION FOR ASIAN AMERICAN CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE APRIL 4, CODEL DINED WITH SENATOR DIOKNO, MRS. EUGENIO LOPEZ, JR., MRS. SERGIO OSMENA III, FATHER GERLOCK AND MARYKNOLL SRS. HELEN AND MARY WHO ARE ACTIVE ON RELIGIOUS SUPERIORS' DETAINEE COMMITTEE. DIOKNO AND SISTERS ATTEMPTED TO MAKE STRONG CASE THAT DETAINEE TORTURE SOP. THEY CITED VARIOUS EXAMPLES. DIOKNO ALSO MADE STRONG EFFORT INTEREST CODEL IN CASE OF HIS CLIENT AMCIT LEHMAN WHOM HE PORTRAYED AS AMERICAN INNOCENT ABROAD. FRASER STAFFER SALZBERG (WHO REMAINING MANILA UNTIL APRIL 10) WAS OBVIOUSLY AFFECTED BY DIOKNO PRESENTATION, COMMENTING "THINGS ARE BAD HERE." FRASER, HOWEVER, OBSERVED THAT "AT LEAST ONE GROUP OF PEOPLE THINKS THEY ARE BAD."

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4. ON MORNING APRIL 5, CODEL MET WITH LOPEZ/ OSMENA IN VETERANS HOSPITAL AND IN AFTERNOON WITH SEN. AQUINO AT FORT BONIFACIO (SEPTELS). HE LUNCHEDED WITH ATENEO ECONOMICS DEPARTMENT CHAIRMAN VALDEPENAS (RECENT LEADER GRANTEE) WHO DISCUSSED INFLATION EFFECTOS OF RAPID BUDGET GROWTH AND WORSENING SITUATION IN SOUTH. VALDEPENAS CLAIMED THIS WOULD EVENTUALLY FOCRE MARCOS SUMMON INTERIM NATIONAL ASSEMBLY. HE ARGUED CUTOFF OF U.S. MILITARY ASSISTANCE WOULD HASTEN THIS DEVELOPMENT. AT AMBASSADOR'S DINNER

THAT EVENING CODEL HEARD LIBERAL STALWARTS ROXAS, RODRIGO, AND TANADA EXCHANGE VIEWS WITH SEC. ENRILE, MELCHOR, TATAD AND SOLGEN MENDOZA. WHILE LEGALISTIC QUIBBLING OFTEN OBSCURED POINTS EACH SIDE TRYING TO MAKE, CODEL OBVIOUSLY INTERESTED IN EXCHANGE OF VIEWS ESPECIALLY ON FREEDOM OF PRESS.

5. COMMENT: CODEL RECEIVED EVERY APPOINTMENT HE HAD REQUESTED. KEPT TO EXTREMELY TIGHT SCHEDULE WHICH PROVIDED NO FREE TIME, FRASER TOOK COPIOUS NOTES AT ALL DISCUSSIONS. HE STRESSED HIS PRIMARY INTEREST IN GENERAL HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES AND NOT IN SUBSTANCE OF CASES SUCH AS AQUINO, ET. CODEL COMMENTED SITUATION HERE QUITE DIFFERENT FROM THAT WHICH PREVAILS IN KOREA. WE THINK CODEL'S VISIT HAD SALUTARY EFFECTS. IT PERMITTED HIM SEE SITUATION FIRST-HAND AND GAINS SOME APPRECIATION OF COMPLEXITY OF HUMAN RIGHTS SOLUTION PROBLEM HERE. IT EVIDENCED
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TO GOP STRONG CONGRESSIONAL INTEREST IN HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION HERE AND EFFECT THIS COULD HAVE ON MILITARY ASSISTANCE. FINALLY, IT GAVE OPPOSITION OPPORTUNITY TO PRESENT THEIR SIDE OF STORY FOR WHICH THEY MOST GRATEFUL. WE DOUBT CODEL CAME TO ANY HARD AND FAST CONCLUSIONS DURING HIS BRIEF VISIT. AT ONE POINT, FRASER COMMENTED TO AMBASSADOR THAT MOST PEOPLE HE TALKED TO AGREED THAT MARTIAL LAW WAS ADMINISTERED WITH RELATIVELY LIGHT HAND AND BRUTALITY SEEMED RARE. BUT WE SUSPECT REFLECTIONS ON HIS DISCUSSIONS HERE MAY INCLINE HIM TO BELIEVE THAT MARCOS CAN AND SHOULD MAKE GREATER EFFORT AT LOOSENING UP. FROM DISCUSSIONS WITH CODEL AND STAFF WE GET IMPRESSION FOCUS COULD BE ON FREEDOM OF PRESS AND THAT FRASER WILL SOMEHOW BRING THIS TO PUBLIC ATTENTION.

6. CODEL APPROACH REMAINED BROAD GAUGED AND OBJECTIVE THROUGHOUT VISIT BUT IT WAS, AS HE NOTED, FIRST VISIT TO PHILIPPINES. IT WAS CONSEQUENTLY DIFFICULT TO ENSURE THAT ALL POINTS COVERED IN BALANCED FASHION. IN PARTICULAR, WE DID NOT HAVE OPPORTUNITY DISCUSS THOROUGHLY RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN MILITARY ASSISTANCE AND BASES. WE RECOMMEND DEPARTMENT CONSIDER RAISING THIS SUBJECT WITH HIM PRELIMINARY TO HEARINGS ON PHILIPPINES. WE WILL FOLLOW-UP WITH STAFFER SALZBERG WHO REMAINING HERE UNTIL APRIL 10. ACCORDING SALZBERG, TRIP REPORT WILL APPEAR SHORTLY AND FRASER WILL HOLD HEARINGS MAY. WE ASSUME THAT REPORT WILL BE PREPARED BY SALZBERG.
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